



# Asylum Speakers: Caribbean Refugees and Testimonial Discourse (American Literatures Initiative)

*April Shemak*

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Offering the first interdisciplinary study of refugees in the Caribbean, Central America, and the United States, *Asylum Speakers* relates current theoretical debates about hospitality and cosmopolitanism to the actual conditions of refugees. In doing so, the author weighs the questions of truth value associated with various modes of witnessing to explore the function of testimonial discourse in constructing refugee subjectivity in New World cultural and political formations. By examining literary works by such writers as Edwidge Danticat, Nikl Payen, Kamau Brathwaite, Francisco Goldman, Julia Alvarez, Ivonne Lamazares, and Cecilia Rodríguez Milans, theoretical work by Jacques Derrida, Edouard Glissant, and Wilson Harris, as well as human rights documents, government documents, photography, and historical studies, *Asylum Speakers* constructs a complex picture of New World refugees that expands current discussions of diaspora and migration, demonstrating that the peripheral nature of refugee testimonial narratives requires us to reshape the boundaries of U.S. ethnic and postcolonial studies.



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